

REMARKS

By this amendment, claims 1, 2, and 11-19 have been amended. Thus, claims 1-4, 6 and 9-20 are now active in the application. Reexamination and reconsideration of the application are respectfully requested.

The specification and abstract have been carefully reviewed and revised to make grammatical and idiomatic improvements in order to aid the Examiner in further consideration of the application. The amendments to the specification and abstract are incorporated in the attached substitute specification and abstract. No new matter has been added.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the specification and Abstract by the current amendment. The attachment is captioned "**Version with markings to show changes made.**"

On pages 2-6 of the Office Action, claims 1-4, 6 and 11-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Sunohara (U.S. 6,958,544); and claims 9 and 10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sunohara in view of Fujisaki et al. (U.S. 5,942,048). These rejections are respectfully traversed because the Sunohara patent (U.S. 6,958,544) does not constitute a prior art reference against the present application claims.

That is, the present application is a U.S. national stage of PCT international application PCT/JP03/04693, filed April 14, 2003. The earliest publication of the Sunohara reference was June 24, 2004 and the U.S. filing date of the Sunohara reference was November 3, 2003. Since the U.S. filing date of the Sunohara reference is subsequent to the international filing date of the present application, the Sunohara patent clearly does not constitute a reference against the claims of the present application.

Therefore, it is respectfully requested that the rejections be withdrawn.


In addition to the above-mentioned review and revision of the specification, the present claims have been reviewed and revised to improve their English grammar and U.S. form, but the substance of the claims has not been changed.

In view of the above, it is submitted that the present application is clearly in condition for allowance, and an early notice thereof is earnestly solicited.

If, after reviewing this Amendment, the Examiner feels there are any issues remaining which must be resolved before the application can be passed to issue, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner contact the undersigned by telephone in order to resolve such issues.

Respectfully submitted,

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